

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Advisory Board

2.01.07 Meeting minutes

Town Hall Board of Selectmen's meeting room

Present:

Jim Dannis

George Infanti

John McCormack

Jack Ruonala

Tom Wilson, Hendrix representative

Absent:

Tom Brennan

Len Mannino

Dave Roedel

Bill Parker, Director Community Development/TIF Administrator

Shirley Wilson, Recording Secretary

John McCormack opened the meeting at 7:30AM.

1. REVIEW OF AGENDA

The agenda was reviewed with J. McCormack adding that concrete steps should be taken to meet with developers to start the process and get in the game. The minutes were distributed and read.

2. UPDATE ON WARRANT ARTICLE

J. McCormack gave a brief synopsis of the Budget and Bond Hearing on the 15th; Al gave the history and John focused on several points to hammer them home. A. Hicks noted that not one question or comment was raised at the Budget and Bond hearing.

Budget Advisory Committee Meeting

J. McCormack gave an overview of last night's Budget Advisory Committee meeting, which lasted two hours, and noted that only five of the nine members were in attendance; Bill Fitzpatrick, who may be the biggest opponent of the warrant article, was not there. J. McCormack then said that the meeting was interesting because some deep seeded issues came out. Unfortunately, the committee stayed with their original 0-9 vote; however, they did agree that the word *extravagant* would be taken out of the minutes, because they were not even sure how that wording appeared.

J. McCormack said clearly it came down to awareness and trust. Despite what is immediate to us, may not be so real to others because the Budget Advisory Committee did not have a clear understanding of the TIF district, the MIDC, or even the scope of the project. Some good suggestions were made, including having a description of the spending in simple terms; the roads, sewer and water going into this area of the property. There were many levels of discussion, but the bottom line was that spending 2.7 million is a lot of money and shouldn't the voters have the right to vote directly on the proposal. It is also an issue of trust in the authority of the Selectmen; their decisions as of late have not been favorable, especially the fact that one or two of the Selectmen were ready to jump onboard with the unpopular 500 home LandQuest project. That may not have been the right project, but it was positive, in that it brought on discussion and got things going. Studies were done and some good work resulted. The membership of this Board represents a wide selection of interests and groups and has a good base to bring projects forward to the Planning Board, to the Water/Sewer commission and ultimately to the voters. We are all responsible for stewardship, not just the Selectmen. There has to be an element of trust in all those making the decisions and to be relied upon to do their job; for the proper analysis to be done, for the execution of contracts and any agreements, and for an overview of executing those various tenders. Although one or two of the Budget Advisory Committee was coming around, and there was willingness to remove *extravagant* from their minutes, there was still concern and lack of support. It was even suggested to include a *Point E* to the warrant article adding wording to the effect that the Selectmen will be stand up guys and do their job. J. McCormack described a situation in Shaker Heights, Ohio when he used to live there and explained that Milford will fall behind neighboring communities without additional industrial or commercial development. We need to build our tax revenue base and try to spread that burden wider; we need to look ahead ten to twenty years from now. As a result of the meeting, we should be more mindful in building that awareness. There is a need for a clear description of the spending, a constant flow of information on the

importance of the warrant article to the voters, and to be systematic in going after this. Timeliness and execution are so important.

A. Hicks said that Brad Vear, marketing representative for the Town and Mike Monks representing Hendrix were both at the meeting last night for support and they reinforced our thoughts. A. Hicks added that he picked up some vibes that there are still people in town that want to keep the land as it is and not develop it. The Budget Advisory Committee has to realize that the Town bought the land for industrial development, the Selectmen were given authority to sell it and the voters approved the TIF district which encourages the sale of the land. The Town made the decision to sell the land a few years ago and the Budget Advisory Committee should not be questioning that now. A. Hicks also said that affordable housing was brought up and the point made, that housing would be more unaffordable with retail level wages as opposed to industrial scale wages.

B. Parker said that LandQuest certainly clouded the issue and upset a few members of the Budget Advisory Committee because they did not grasp just how preliminary the project was. By the end of the meeting, however, the committee members were more comfortable knowing there were checks and balances between this group, the Planning Board and the Selectmen. J. McCormack added that there was clearly no understanding of what went into this warrant article.

M. Reeve said that other boards and committees don't seem to have the involvement until something happens monetarily; the educational part is late from their viewpoint. The Budget Advisory Committee is not self educated. J. McCormack said, in fairness, that this Board has been at Planning Board meetings and Selectmen's meetings and the MIDC has been around for quite some time. The Budget committee was simply not part of the process. B. Parker added that we just assume everyone is aware, but that's just not the case.

A. Hicks mentioned that one Selectmen had told him that he was against 500 homes when he first heard about the LandQuest project, like most people; however, when he heard the whole proposal, he then thought it might have a positive aspect to it, but didn't say he was for it. He admitted that there were pros and cons; and someone just picked up on the later statement. A. Hicks also mentioned, as Mike Monks did at last night's Budget Advisory Committee meeting, that the state has money available over two-year periods if jobs are created within certain districts and salary ranges. There could be more money to tap into; \$20,000 per job, up to \$500,000 per year.

T. Wilson said one of the issues raised at the meeting was that the Selectmen could have a 3-2 vote in reference to the bonding. Would there be any advantage to say it required a unanimous vote by the BOS, or would that just create more bureaucracy. A brief discussion followed. J. McCormack said this was a point that we need to be mindful of and we should focus on the system of checks and balances between all the boards, including the various public hearings. G. Infanti said this wouldn't be an overnight project; there would be a least a six month process just to get through the ZBA and Planning Boards. T. Wilson clarified that all this warrant article is trying to do is take the time frame from a twelve (12) to fifteen (15) month process and keep it within that more timely existing six (6) month process, with due diligence and all the approvals from the different boards. A discussion regarding the checks and balances ensued.

Deliberative Session

Al & John will do the presentation on Saturday and B. Parker said he would put something together for them. A. Hicks inquired about using overheads and expressed concern about the audience being able to read them. A discussion regarding the preparations and the presentation for deliberative session followed.

Highlighting the following details:

- A simplified description of the spending;
- Outline the checks and balances;
- Highlight the benefit of the infrastructure to others in the area;
Tying into the sewer system for Heron Pond Elementary
- List the other benefits;
Enhancement of the tax base

Create jobs

- Emphasize the dead period and timeliness.

T. Wilson suggested that maybe we could also bring up the types of businesses we are trying to attract and list the businesses that we've lost, having gone elsewhere, instead of Milford. J. McCormack noted that the big one would be FW Webb that went to Amherst and reiterated the need to be competitive and to have the tools in place to be more competitive. M. Reeve said the taxpayers should also be made aware of the disadvantages while we are talking up the advantages.

A. Hicks asked if the Selectmen would take a position and support this on the floor at the deliberative session because throughout this process, he has not heard any verbal support from any of the Selectmen and wondered if new rules were in place. B. Parker said he was not sure how the Selectmen operated and noted that they did vote 5-0 in support, but he could ask Jim to speak out, in support. M. Reeve added that we cannot overdo support.

Public education

Article for Cabinet

It was decided that the editorial article would go in the February 22nd issue. B. Parker said the article could be 800 to 1,000 words and would need to be submitted by February 16th.

Other avenues to publicize

The Cabinet and Telegraph: A. Hicks said he spoke with the Cabinet reporter who will also do an article that will go in a later edition, after the editorial. G. Infanti also suggested contacting Dave Brooks for the Telegraph.

The Rotary: M. Reeve said that many of the Rotary members do not live in Milford, but maybe they could influence someone else.

Chamber of Commerce: B. Parker said Dave will contact the Chamber of Commerce and they could possibly put it on their website. J. McCormack said we could also distribute our five-six page power point presentation to interested parties.

Local Businesses: G. Infanti said he is waiting for a callback from John Morrison of Hitchiner. T. Wilson suggested putting something the Hendrix newsletter or maybe distributing flyers at Hitchiner's restaurant, the Barn. M. Reeve said he could ask Steve Boucher of Airmar, who is a member of the MIDC, to do something.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

B. Parker said he was contacted by Don Zizzi, former director of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) who now is with the Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University in Boston. One of their projects is to work with local communities to build economic capacity and there is a program for self-assessment. It sounds like a good program and there is \$5,000 in program money with the State matching half of that, for ten communities in New Hampshire. B. Parker said that Don would be willing to come speak to us and then went through the Economic development presentation for the Board. (Copy attached to the minutes.)

J. McCormack said this is an interesting approach and would make sense for Milford to engage in a systematic method and enter into a partnership rather than try to reinvent the wheel ourselves. It would also be helpful to get additional feedback and references from any other towns that have entered into this type of partnership, if we have to sell this to the Selectmen and Town administration. This recommendation will involve more than just the TIF district, so it will have to be decided under whose auspices this will fall. G. Infanti said that most of the work will naturally fall to the Community Development office. B. Parker said this project seems like it would be something that could help us focus our energies, give us some guidance and zero in on what we need to do. J. McCormack said this would be a very positive action on our part and we should take the next step and invite Don to speak at our next meeting.

4. PENDING ITEMS

Finalization of simplified by-laws (John/Bill)

J. McCormack said the by-laws should really be finished because there were questions at the Budget Advisory Committee meeting regarding membership, who we represent, and how long the TIF will be in place. B. Parker noted that it will be easier to concentrate on this task, after the deliberative session.

Meetings with developers (D. Roedel)

B. Parker said he has been in contact by email with Dave who is actively working with Konover to coordinate the meeting.

Marketing opportunities

J. McCormack said February would be a good month to request the first report from Brad Vear.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

Next meeting

The next meeting date is scheduled for February 22, 2007 at 7:30 AM.

Minutes approval

G. Infanti motioned to accept the minutes. M. Reeve seconded and all in favor.

Other

G. Infanti mentioned that when this committee was first set up; we wanted representation from the school board so they would have input. Len Mannino hasn't been to any of the meetings and maybe his term is up; however, that would be another avenue for us to get the information out there. The school board has a lot of exposure and we're missing that right now. B. Parker offered to contact Peter Bragdon.

J. McCormack said in summary, that we went over a lot of feedback from the Budget Advisory Committee, which was helpful and exposed us to some areas where we can do better job of getting our points across; for the warrant article, the TIF project, and economic development in general. We need to continue to build awareness and to build trust on actions that can have a positive impact on the community. We also have the opportunity to look at a partnership with Northeastern University to approach our development in a systematic way and we should ask the Selectmen and Planning Board if it would be alright to start this process.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40AM.

To do items:

- ⇒ Revise the draft by-laws.
- ⇒ Solid steps to meet with Konover and other developers.
- ⇒ TIF bond warrant article; materials and presentation.
- ⇒ Publicity for warrant article
- ⇒ Guest editorial for the Cabinet due 2/16/07
- ⇒ Set up Economic Development meeting with Don Zizzi
- ⇒ February monthly report from Brad Vear
- ⇒ School Board membership

Continuing items:

- ⇒ Maintain an on-going progress file.
- ⇒ State support
 - ⇒ ten year plan for access to the property
 - ⇒ job creation within two-year periods
- ⇒ Proposal, re-marketing plan and list of key players from Brad Vear.
- ⇒ On-going contact with Land Quest.